



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Journalist Ernest Vardanean

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 13, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States remains deeply concerned by the arrest of journalist Ernest Vardanean and the procedures under which he is being held, as well as by other recent arrests and detentions by Transnistrian authorities. We continue to hear reports that Mr. Vardanean has been mistreated while in custody and that he has been denied the right to choose his own legal counsel, despite assurances to the contrary by the Transnistrian authorities.

If these allegations are true, they would constitute an abuse of Mr. Vardanean's internationally recognized human rights. So far, we have seen no positive results from international appeals to the authorities. We once again urge that Mr. Vardanean's human rights be respected.

Moreover, we are concerned that his arrest and detention may be indicative of a broader problem of ongoing pressure and intimidation against Transnistrian civil society representatives.

We welcome the OSCE Mission to Moldova's continued monitoring of the situation and their urging of respect for human rights and due process. We would like to request an update on the status of these cases.

Regarding the resolution of the Transnistria conflict, we look forward to Kazakhstan hosting an informal 5+2 meeting in Astana May 24, but we continue to urge the earliest possible resumption of formal negotiations in the 5+2 format. We hope the May 24 meeting will move the sides closer to formal talks. The United States reiterates its commitment to the long-term, peaceful resolution of the Transnistria conflict that respects Moldova's sovereignty and territorial integrity. In our view, the 5+2 format remains the only internationally accepted mechanism for reaching a negotiated settlement to the conflict, and we urge all participants to make this mechanism as effective as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.